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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAGUA 000358

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CEN KRAAIMOORE
DEPT FOR DRL MAGGIO
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/01/2019

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SUBJECT: CPC DEATH THREATS TO HUMAN & LABOR RIGHTS DEFENDER

Classified By: Ambassador Robert J. Callahan for reasons 1.4 (b & d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On March 26, Human Rights Defender and Labor Activist Alvaro Leiva Sanchez received a hand-written death threat signed by the Citizen Power Council (CPC) allegedly from Masaya. The note was addressed to Mr. Leiva's mother-in-law, but the death threat was directed against Mr. Leiva, his wife and two children for "continuing to attack the FSLN" in his lawsuit against the illegal firings of over 10,000 Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MTI) employees by the FSLN government. Mr. Leiva reported the incident to the police in Masaya where he lives, and publicly denounced the death threat during a special press conference on Tuesday, March 31 at the Permanent Commission on Human Rights (CPDH) in Managua. The death threat shows once again that Nicaraguan human rights defenders continue to be targets for harassment. END SUMMARY

ALVARO LEIVA SANCHEZ BIO

¶2. (C) Alvaro Leiva Sanchez, age 45, is a rising figure in Nicaragua's human and labor rights community. While studying medicine in college, he was forced to flee Nicaragua in 1987 and became a political refugee in Guatemala until 1995. His experience as a political refugee led him to change careers to law in order to defend human rights. When he returned to Nicaragua, Mr. Leiva found work in the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MTI) and became involved in the employee union. He rose through the union leadership ranks and eventually became the General Secretary of the Public Employees Union of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (SEMTIAC). After the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) returned to power in 2007, Mr. Leiva defended thousands of MTI union employees who were illegally fired from their positions. Mr. Leiva himself was fired from his MTI job last year. Mr. Leiva has filed lawsuits against the FSLN government and MTI for the illegal firings and has also taken steps to file these cases with the Inter-American Court on Human Rights (IACHR). He currently serves as the CPHD Human Rights coordinator for Masaya, Granada, and Rivas departments. Mr. Leiva was mentioned in post,s 2008 Human Rights Report and has been nominated for an International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP).

THE CPC DEATH THREAT

¶3. (C) A handwritten note was left at the home of Elbia Morales Ortega, the mother-in-law of Mr. Leiva on March 26. It said: "Mrs. Elbia, tell your son-in-law that he better shut his mouth and not continue attacking the FSLN for believing that he would be in the Ministry of Transportation forever not knowing that his days are numbered, and that his two daughters and wife could appear in the street or his house in flames or full of the worms that go in the canals...that we already know where he lives on lemon street in the Chester house... (signed) CPC." Included with the note was a clipping of Mr. Leiva's recent editorial in La Prensa about labor laws. After filing a police report about the incident on March 26, Mr. Leiva contacted EmbOff on March 30 to share a copy of the police report and death threat. He held a press conference at CPHD headquarters in Managua to denounce the death threat on March 31.

COMMENT

¶4. (C) While this is not the first time that Nicaraguan human rights figures have been subject to death threats for attacking the FSLN governm

CALLAHAN